



An investment in safety, mobility and prosperity

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Transportation Officials Mark 50th Anniversary Of Maine's Interstate Highway System

HAMPDEN, Maine – Department of Transportation Commissioner David Cole today unveiled a new sign at the Hampden Visitor Information Center commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Maine's Interstate Highway System. The event marked Pres. Dwight D. Eisenhower's signing of the Federal Highway Act on June 29, 1956, thus paving the way for creation of America's Interstate highway system that today connects people nationwide via a 42,795-mile network of roads.

"President Eisenhower's foresight helped create the backbone of economic growth here in Maine and across the country," Commissioner Cole said. "His vision of linking the Atlantic, Pacific and all points in between with modern superhighways has resulted in decades of faster, safer travel for America's citizens and commercial interests."

The commissioner was joined at the event by representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, Maine Turnpike Authority, American Society of Civil Engineers, Associated Constructors of Maine, Maine Better Transportation Association, and Maine State Police, among others.

In addition to launching the Interstate system plan, the Federal Highway Act also established the Federal Highway Trust Fund as a means for generating the federal share of construction and maintenance costs through a dedicated fuel tax. This "user fee" concept — as well as that of a multi-lane, limited-access divided highway built to uniform design standards — were cutting-edge ideas when first proposed 50 years ago.

According to MaineDOT historical documents, the first two sections of Maine Interstate funded for construction were "from Brunswick village south through Freeport to the Desert of Maine Road, and the Main Street interchange near the City Hospital in Bangor." The Brunswick-Freeport section first opened to traffic in 1957 and the Bangor Industrial Spur (later to become part of today's I-395) opened from Main Street to Odlin Road in 1959.

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An investment in safety, mobility and prosperity

Maine Interstate's 50th Anniversary

Page 2 of 2

Construction of I-95 as we know it today wasn't simply a matter of starting at one end and building to the other; funding, property acquisition and unique construction issues all played a part. Although progress generally was from south to north, there were significant gaps in the system that forced drivers to travel winding, less safe rural routes until the entire length of four-lane divided highway was completed in September 1981.

Built at a cost of more than \$450 million (a bargain by today's standards), Maine's Interstate is a 367-mile system comprising I-95 from Kittery to Houlton; I-295 from Portland to Gardiner; I-195 in Saco; and I-395 in Bangor. The system, which also contains 251 main line bridges and 100 overpasses, currently accounts for 1.8 billion vehicle miles of travel annually, including 80 percent of the \$61 billion in goods shipped to and from sites in Maine each year.

"Maine's Interstate system provides incredible value in terms of economic growth, driver safety and mobility," Commissioner Cole continued. "It is incumbent upon all of us to see that it is properly maintained and upgraded to ensure the prosperity and well-being of our citizens for generations to come."

- 30 -





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KEY FACTS ABOUT MAINE'S INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

The Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways — which has been called the most ambitious public works project built since the Roman Empire — is the most critical link in Maine's transportation system.

Maine has 367 miles of Interstate routes running the length of the state and connecting the state's major urban areas.

Maine's Interstate system, which includes three percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 21 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.

Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in Maine have increased by 288 percent, the state's population has jumped by 39 percent from 947,000 to approximately 1.3 million and the number of vehicles in Maine has increased by 219 percent.

The state's Interstate Highway System saves the average Maine resident \$1,891 per year — \$2.5 billion statewide — in reduced crash costs such as medical expenses and lost productivity, the value of saved time and fuel, and reduced apparel, food, housing and transportation costs.

By reducing travel times, the Interstate system saves each Maine resident 41 hours of travel time annually — 54 million hours statewide.

Maine's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 26 million gallons.

Consumer costs have been significantly lowered by the Interstate Highway System. The cost of transporting goods has been reduced because the time it takes to make trips has been decreased.

The following chart indicates the total savings per person and statewide of the Interstate system.

| | Per Person | Statewide |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Safety | \$77 | \$101 million |
| Time and Fuel | \$655 | \$863 million |
| Reduced Consumer Costs | \$1,159 | \$1.5 billion |
| Total | \$1,891 | \$2.5 billion |

Page 1 of 2





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Traffic levels on Maine's Interstate highways is increasing as travel growth outpaces the addition of new lanes.

Between 1990 and 2004, vehicle travel on Maine's Interstates increased by 45 percent, while lane miles on the system only increased by one-fifth of one percent.

Between 1990 and 2004, the average annual amount of travel per Interstate-lane-mile in Maine increased by 45 percent.

Travel on Maine's Interstate highways is safer than travel on all other roadways in the state. Maine's Interstates provide travelers with a network of highways with a variety of safety designs that greatly reduce the likelihood of serious crashes.

Maine's Interstate highways have saved approximately 800 lives in Maine since 1956. This estimate is based on assuming that if there were no Interstate highways, traffic would be carried by other major roads in the state, which have higher traffic fatality rates.

The features that make Interstates safer than non-Interstate routes include: a separation from other roads and rail lines, a minimum of four-lanes, gentler curves and paved shoulders, median barriers and rumble strips to warn drivers when they are leaving the roadway.

The Interstate system is the backbone of the Maine economy and has played a critical role in improving business productivity in the state.

Every year, \$32 billion in goods are shipped from sites in Maine and another \$29 billion in goods are shipped to sites in Maine, mostly by truck.

Seventy-eight percent of the goods shipped annually from sites in Maine are carried by trucks and another nine percent are carried by courier services, which use trucks for part of the deliveries. Similarly, 80 percent of the goods shipped to sites in Maine are carried by trucks and another 13 percent are carried by courier services, which use trucks for part of their deliveries.

NOTE: To produce this fact sheet, data from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the U.S. Census Bureau were compiled and analyzed by TRIP, a nonprofit transportation research group based in Washington, DC. Information is the latest available.